

## Message Text

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65-61

ACTION NEA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

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FOR KUX AND LORTON, NEA/INS

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SOPN, NP, US

SUBJ: NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE OF CORONATION

1. I HAVE JUST RECEIVED A LETTER DATED MARCH 27, 1975 FROM  
LUIS MARDEN OF THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC INFORMING ME THAT THEY  
HAVE DECIDED NOT TO GO AHEAD WITH AN ARTICLE ON THE CORONATION.  
ALTHOUGH YOU MAY BE FULLY INFORMED ABOUT THIS, LET ME GIVE YOU  
MARDEN'S EXPLANATION:

QUOTE FIRST OF ALL I WRITE TO THANK YOU FOR THE MANY COURTE-  
SIES SHOWN ME AND MY ASSOCIATE, BRUCE BAUMANN, DURING OUR  
RECENT VISIT TO NEPAL FOR THE CORONATION OF HIS MAJESTY KING  
BIRENDRA. IT WAS PARTICULARLY KIND OF YOU TO GO TO SO MUCH  
TROUBLE FOR US AT A TIME WHEN YOU WERE SO BESET BY OFFICIAL  
DUTIES, AND WE AND THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC ARE DEEPLY APPRE-  
CIATIVE.

IT IS THEREFORE WITH REAL REGRET THAT I MUST TELL YOU  
THAT THE EDITOR HAS DECIDED THAT WE DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH  
MATERIAL TO WARRANT PUBLISHING AN ARTICLE IN THE GEOGRAPHIC  
ON THE CORONATION. AS YOU KNOW, WE WERE PROMISED FACILITIES  
FOR OBTAINING THE KIND OF PHOTOGRAPHS AND INFORMATION NEEDED  
FOR A FULL-SCALE GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE BUT, IN THE EVENT, WE  
WERE GIVEN ONLY THE OPPORTUNITIES AFFORDED THE REST OF THE  
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PRESS, AND NOTHING MORE. IT IS NOT THAT WE CONSIDER OURSELVES

BETTER OR MORE PRIVILEGED THAN THE OTHER PRESS REPRESENTATIVES BUT RATHER, AS YOU CAN APPRECIATE, THAT TO PUBLISH THE KIND OF FULL-DRESS ARTICLE WE HAD ENVISAGED, WE WOULD NEED A MUCH GREATER VARIETY OF PHOTOGRAPHS, BOTH BEFORE AND AFTER THE ACUTAL CROWNING, THAN WE WERE ABLE TO GET. BY THE TIME WE COULD HAVE THE ARTICLE IN THE HANDS OF OUR READERS, IT WOULD NO LONGER BE NEWS, AND THAT IS ALL WE HAD, NEWS PHOTOGRAPHS. BRUCE BAUMANN WAS ABLE TO MAKE SOME EXCELLENT PICTURES OF THE ACTUAL CORONATION, BUT THE WHOLE COLLECTION WAS TOO SLENDER FOR OUR NEEDS.

I AM VERY SORRY THAT ALL OUR EFFORTS, AND PARTICULARLY THE EFFORTS OF YOUR OWN GOOD SELF AND THOSE OF YOUR STAFF, CAME TO NAUGHT, BUT I AM GLAD THAT I HAD THE VERY REAL PLEASURE OF MEETING YOU, AND THAT I WAS ABLE TO SEE SOMETHING OF THE BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY OF NEPAL, WHICH I HOPE TO VISIT AGAIN ONE DAY.

I SEND MY WARMEST REGARDS AND THANKS TO YOU AND TO MRS. CARGO. UNQUOTE

2. I CAN WELL UNDERSTAND NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC'S SENSE OF FRUSTRATION, AND PERHAPS EVEN OF PIQUE, AT THEIR INABILITY TO HAVE AN INTERVIEW WITH HIS MAJESTY OR TO SHOOT PICTURES OF HIM IN LESS FORMAL, NONCORONATION SETTINGS. WE TRIED TO BE HELPFUL ON BOTH OF THESE POINTS WHILE MARDEN AND BAUMANN WERE HERE AND CHIRAN THAPA DID AGREE TO FORWARD QUESTIONS FROM MARDEN TO HIS MAJESTY FOR WRITTEN REPLIES IN LIEU OF AN INTERVIEW. I ALSO REALIZE THAT THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TEAM FELT THAT THE BBC TELEVISION TEAM WAS RECEIVING SPECIAL TREATMENT THAT WAS NOT ACCORDED TO THEM. NOTWITHSTANDING ALL OF THIS, I CANNOT HELP BUT FEEL THAT THE DECISION NOT TO GO AHEAD WITH AN ARTICLE ON THE CORONATION IS A CONSIDERABLE MISTAKE. FIRST OF ALL, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR ME TO BELIEVE, AFTER WATCHING BAUMANN AND MARDEN IN ACTION TAKING LITERALLY THOUSANDS OF PHOTOGRAPHS THAT THEY DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH TO MAKE A COMPLETELY FASCINATING SHORT ARTICLE ON THE CORONATION. BAUMANN WAS IN KATHMANDU FOR SEVERAL DAYS AHEAD OF THE EVENT AND TOOK PHOTOGRAPHS ALL AROUND KATHMANDU AND THE VALLEY. MARDEN REMAINED ON AND FROM MY OWN KNOWLEDGE PHOTOGRAPHED THE POSTCORONATION ROYAL MILITARY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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REVIEW AT THE TUNDIKHEL AND ALSO WENT WITH HIS CAMERA TO THE UNIQUE SHIVARATRI FESTIVAL AT PASHUPATINATH. I AM ALSO SURPRISED THAT THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC EDITORS DO NOT FEEL IMPELLED TO PROVIDE FOR THE EDIFICATION OF THEIR LARGE AND VARIED READERSHIP THE BEST COVERAGE THEY CAN OF ONE OF THE MOST COLORFUL EVENTS IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD IN RECENT YEARS. MORE IMPORTANTLY, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC HAS A LONG RECORD OF GOOD RELATIONS WITH NEPALESE GOVERNMENTS AND A CONSIDERABLE

INVESTMENT TO PROTECT FOR THE FUTURE. I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT THE NEPALESE WILL FEEL MOST UNHAPPY, PERHAPS EVEN AFFRONTED, BY A NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC DECISION NOT TO DO AN ARTICLE. I DOUBT THAT THEY WILL BE ABLE TO ACCEPT THE LOGIC OF MARDEN'S EXPOSITION OF THE REASONS THEFORE ESPECIALLY IN VIEW OF NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC'S COVERAGE OF THE MAHENDRA CORONATION AND PRITICULARLY THE RECENT BHUTAN CORONATION. IT WOULD BE SAD INDEED IF A MISUNDERATANDING OVER THE EXPECTED CORONATION ARTICLE WOULD LEAD TO A DETERIORATIN OF NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC'S FINE STANDING WITH THE NEPALESE.

3. THESE ARE MY REFLECTIONS AFTER READING LUIS MARDEN'S LETTER. I WISH YOU WOULD SHARE THIS SITUATION WITH CAROL LAISE AND, IF YOU THINK IT USEFUL, YOU MIGHT WANT TO GET IN TOUCH WITH BARRY BISHOP, LUIS MARDEN OR OTHER SENIOR NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PEOPLE. YOU MIGHT WANT TO GET PHIL BUCHEN INVOLVED IN THIS IF HE IS WILLING.

4. IF NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC DOES PERSIST IN ITS PRESENT DECISION, I ASSUME THEY WILL COMMUNICATE THIS DIRECTLY TO THE NEPALESE OFFICIALS WITH WHOM THEY WERE IN WRITTEN COMMUNICATION TO SET UP THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE OF THE CORONATION. THE EMBASSY OF COURSE WOULD BE GLAD TO PASS SUCH COMMUNICATIONS TO THE NEPALESE ADDRESSEES. THE REASON FOR THIS COMMENT IS THE OBVIOUS ONE THAT NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SHOULD EXPLAIN THEIR DECISION TO THE NEPALESE IN THEIR OWN WORDS. PERHAPS THEY HAVE ALREADY DONE SO TO AMBASSADOR KHANAL IN WASHINGTON. CARGO

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